



Firefighters Employment, Standards, and Training Council Meeting
April 22, 2026
Conference Call

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT:

NAME	REPRESENTING	TERM ENDING
Carlos Aviles St. Augustine Fire	FL Fire Chiefs' Association	June 30, 2026 (2nd term)
Byron Bennett North Bay Fire Control Dist.	State Fire Marshal	June 30, 2026 (1 st term)
Brad Bischoff Bradenton Fire Department	FL Professional FF Assoc.	Jan. 31, 2027 (1 st term)
Aaron Colburn Reedy Creek Emergency Svs.	FL Professional FF Assoc.	Jan. 31, 2027 (1 st term)
Thomas DiBernardo Florida Department of Health	Bureau of EMS	Jan. 31, 2027 (1 st term)
Darrel Donatto Town of Palm Beach	Florida League of Cities	Jan. 31, 2027 (1 st term)
Shawn Hanson Greater Naples Fire Rescue	Florida Fire Marshals Association	Oct. 31, 2026 (2nd term)
Dara Hennessey City of Cocoa Fire Rescue	State Fire Marshal	June 30, 2026 (1 st term)
Patrick Kennedy West Palm Beach County F/R	Florida Association of Counties	June 30, 2026 (1 st term)
Dr. David Lee Sylvester Comprehensive	State Fire Marshal	June 30, 2026 (2 nd term)
Jim Millican Lealman Fire District	Florida Association Sp. Districts	Oct. 31, 2026 (2 nd term)
Terry Parris Panama City Beach	State Fire Marshal	Jan. 1, 2027 (1 st term)
Michael Woodward City of Oviedo Fire Dept.	FL Fire Chiefs' Association	June 30, 2026 (1 st term)

ABSENT:

Jeremy Joseph Florida Forest Service	Florida Forest Service/DOA	Jan. 31, 2027 (1 st term)
Kevin Reed Hillsborough C.C	State Fire Marshal	Oct. 31, 2026 (2nd term)

The Firefighters Employment, Standards and Training Council meeting was called to order.

On a motion duly made, the minutes from the Firefighters Employment, Standards and Training Council held on January 6, 2026, were approved.

Motion carried.

REPORT FROM DIVISION: *given by JoAnne Rice, Director*

- Director Rice thanked council members Carlos Aviles and Dr. David Lee for serving on both the FFESTC and FFIRS Councils as they have come to the end of their second terms.
- Working on replacement members and also on re-appointments for members who have agreed to a second term
- SFM Re-Org
 - Firefighter Health & Safety has been moved up under the Director's Office. Safety Supervisor Mike DeStefano will still work out of the Fire College office. Looking for two new Safety Compliance Officers.
- Florida Department of Health/Firefighter Suicides
 - Has been provided all of our firefighter certification data to work with vital statistics on firefighter suicides under the requirement of HB 929/OSHA/69A-62
 - UCF Restores will also be working with the data to see the full scope
- Health & Safety
 - Behavior Health Committee
 - Working on Strategic Plan/Framework to reduce suicides
 - Hope to have a presentation in July at EDC
 - HB929/OSHA/69A-61
 - Phased in approach for PFOS free gear
 - Research
 - Guidelines
 - Best Practices
- Annual Report
 - Civilian fatalities are up. Data and tracking are now better, could be the reason for increase. Working with BFAI for better picture.
 - 69A-66 FFIRS Rule
 - Looking at greater requirement for fire fatality reporting
 - Looking at tracking departments going to 42-hour workweek

REPORT FROM THE BUREAU: *given by Bruce Gillingham, Bureau Chief*

- Stats
 - Firefighter II certified 626 (ytd)
 - Current employment is 44,426

- Currently 49,650 certified Firefighter II
- Roughly 5,224 currently not employed
- 30 volunteers were certified in the 1st quarter of the year
- 81 students currently enrolled in “Grow As You Go”
- Out of State Firefighters
 - May – 47 testing
 - Jan/Feb, held 3 testing dates, 40 tested, 30 passed
 - Changes made – streamlined application process, updates have been made in FireTRAQ, added more test dates.
 - Getting more applicants through the process. Currently 93 applications for testing are pending and 141 in the process of verifying training.
- Campus
 - May 6-7, Instructor Conference
 - September – Lithium-Ion Symposium
- Campus Construction
 - Roofing
 - Cafeteria
 - Courtyard
 - Bathrooms in Dorms
- IFSAC will be on campus in August for review
- FireTRAQ
 - Majority of bugs are out of system
 - Reports are now accessible
 - Supp Comp getting streamlined
 - Data set (on back side) clean up on fire department data, deceased firefighter data, etc.

Director Rice: Last year the Bureau certified 3, 065 firefighters with a net gain of only 1,053 due to retirement. There are approximately 18,000 firefighters within FRS in the DROP. The Division continues to market recruitment programs. 1, 208 also expired last year.

REPORT FROM SAFETY: *given by Mike DiStefano, Safety Program Manager*

- Fire Department Safety Compliance Inspections (69A-62) 3-year cycle.
 - 2025 – 35 completed.
 - Roughly 2/3 of the Florida fire departments have had a Safety Compliance Inspection, remaining members have either tried to get it or let it lapse.
 - 2026 (ytd) have completed approximately 20 inspections
- Investigations of Firefighter injuries
 - 2025 – 12 were completed
 - Safety has 5 part-time (OPS) Safety Compliance Officers that conduct inspections as well as firefighter injury investigations. Looking to hire 2 additional full-time officers.
- Under 69A-62.032, all departments are required to report any serious firefighter injury or fatality to the Division of State Fire Marshal within 4 hours. Serious injury would include,
 - Loss of a limb
 - Loss of impairment bodily organ or mental capacity

- More than 24-hour hospitalization
- Disfigurement or injury caused by equipment failure (including air packs)
- Misinformation: Notifying the Arson Unit – this is not the proper agency to notify.
- Main focus
 - Education
 - Compliance
 - Assistance

AD Gatlin: Update on “Lessons Learned” on investigations. Legal has advised that the reports would have to be heavily redacted before released.

Basic Overview of Miami-Dade Report (6/2024): Miami-Dade was contracted to do training for an out of country resources. During training session, unauthorized personnel were involved in a live fire training incident and unfortunately a death and several injuries occurred. The findings showed several contributing factors including failure to follow 1403 and department standards.

Basic Overview of Delray Ladder Truck vs Train Report (12/2024). Ladder truck approaching tracks, driver stopped for signals, train went by, before the signals (gates) moved, and thinking it was clear with the train having passed, he started moving the apparatus around the gates, there was another training coming which caused the collision. 111 passengers were on the train with injuries reported. Investigation showed, department SOP’s were a bit flawed relating to driving policies while driving near rail road tracks.

Chairman Donatto stated it would be helpful for the Division to make these reports public and widely spread across the State for the valuable information they hold including “Lessons Learned”.

Mike DiStefano stated the reports are available on the Safety website.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Council member, Tom DiBernardo stated that the suicide data has been retrieved and being analyzed. Community Paramedics may be helpful with this. There are currently 36 Community Paramedic programs in the State.

EMT and Paramedic renewals this year and it is now fully electronic. Please remind your agencies. Contact him for information and Provider Codes. Renewals will now allow members to use their home address. Agencies will still be able to “bulk pay”.

Pushing out demographics to collect data and see how many licenses are actively being used.

Chairman Donatto: Matching of Firefighter Certifications to vital statistics will help greatly with firefighter suicide tracking and colorations and other trends.

AUDIENCE:

Director Rice

Would like the Council to think about putting curriculum together for a Firefighter Health & Safety 8-hour renewal requirement for Instructors which would include topics like mental health best practices, cancer decontamination etc.

Instructor I, Director Rice, has concerns about the Instructor I requirement of 6 years of experience as a firefighter and Course Delivery is not enough. Would like Council to take a look at possible changes.

NEXT MEETING: TBD

ADJOURN.

Audio file available upon request